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ABSTRACT

This curriculum analysis of black South African education considers conflict and change in historical, contemporary, and postapartheid contexts. Part 1, "The Historical Context," interprets curriculum evolution, beginning with the evangelical curriculum for slaves in 1658 and concluding with formalization of racism in the apartheid policy of 1948, which aligned curriculum content with ideological interests. Institutionalization of the black curriculum challenges a postapartheid design. Apartheid ideology is embedded in textbooks' assumptive meanings, educational inequality neutralizes empowerment, and racism blocks the social and economic mobility of educated blacks. "The Contemporary Context," part 2, argues that a curriculum conflict dialectic is operative. The functions of schooling--cultural and economic reproduction, legitimation, and socialization--are not realized in curricula. Resistance and conflict are treated in the curriculum with distortion, deemphasis, and devaluation; conflict is portrayed as being interethnic in nature. Curricular objectives contradict experiential realities of black students. After the Soweto uprising a search for alternative curriculum methods began. Part 3, "The Postapartheid Context," enumerates implications for curricular change, including the following: (1) curriculum change should take cognizance of currently embedded curricular forms, meanings, and assumptions; (2) "shared meaning" between curriculum developers and users should determine change; and (3) change should be ideologically and contextually responsive. A consensus approach in a postcolonial context will affirm the approaching postapartheid dispensation. Three pages of references are appended. (CJH)

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CURRICULUM : CONTEXT, CONFLICT AND CHANGE IN BLACK SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

The general focus of this paper is on the curriculum dimension of black South African education. Specifically, the curriculum analysis is based on an approach which connects past, present and future considerations of the curriculum :

a) the historical context

By providing a critical interpretation of the genesis and evolution of the curriculum and into its present form, the issues of change and stability are clarified.

b) the contemporary context

It will be argued that a curriculum-conflict dialectic has emerged in black schools , with positive social and educational consequences.

c) the postapartheid context

The curricular implications of historical and contemporary analyses for a postapartheid educational dispensation are briefly outlined.

I. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

In the evolution of the curriculum for blacks, different curricular emphases can be distinguished. These could be categorized (ideal-typical, of course) as follows:

1. the evangelical curriculum

The first school in South Africa was started for slaves in 1658. The explicit purpose of schooling was religious instruction. This evangelical emphasis characterized the curriculum until the beginning of

the 19th century (Pells 1938; Du Plessis 1965).

2. the academic curriculum

The British Occupation of the Cape (1795 and 1806) and the intitiation of European missionary education were key factors leading to the introduction of "secular content" in the form of a rudimentary liberal arts curriculum in the 19th century. For example, by 1872 Lovedale (the first secondary school for blacks) included Mathematics, Botany, Natural Philosophy, Political Economy and English Literature in its curriculum (see Burchell 1976).

3. the industrial training curriculum

Devastating frontier wars between blacks and the settlers in the 19th century led George Grey (governor of the Cape) to define the purpose of education as "social control through peaceful subjugation". To this end he implemented a curriculum with the emphasis on industrial training i.e., providing blacks with skills for manual labour (Behr et al. 1971).

4. the differentiated curriculum

Increasing racist tendencies, influenced (paradoxically) in part by the challenge and threat of blacks who were skilled for manual labor at the dawn of industrialization, was the dynamic overshadowing the curriculum debate as the country entered the 20th century. The first differentiated curriculum for blacks was introduced in 1922, with devastating consequences (Dube 1985; Tabata 1960).

5. the apartheid curriculum

In 1948 the growing racism in the country was formalized and

systematized in a policy called 'apartheid'. Apartheid revisionists reiterated the historical call for a stronger alignment between curriculum content, and the ideological and material interests of a racially-driven political economy.

Consider the following samples:

C.T. Loram (administrator) in 1927:

> "Which is really more important in the African villages today - practical hygiene or the ability to read? Elementary agriculture or geography? Wise recreation or arithmetic?" [2]

E.G. Pells (academic) in 1938:

> "What boots it to teach a man to read if he can never get hold of a book? Why teach him the use of table-cloths and cutlery if he cannot afford to buy them? Why teach him agriculture when all the arable land is already occupied?" [3]

Hence, H.F. Verwoerd (apartheid architect) in 1954:

> "What is the use of teaching the Bantu child mathematics when it cannot use it in practice?...That is absurd" [4].

But there is a curious paradox which emerges in reflecting on the curriculum today. It is this: that despite (1) the changing curricular emphases since the 1650s, (2) the hysterical call of apartheid rhetoricians in the 1950s for revisionist curricula, and (3) the reformist educational policies for black education since the 1950s, the reality in the 1980s is that the curriculum in black schools shows a remarkable degree of stability and consistency. The explanation for this lies, I would suggest, in three interrelated phenomena:

1. the institutionalization of ideological forms:

Recent content analyses of school textbooks have exposed the subtle and pervasive institutionalization of racism in the curriculum (Dean et al., 1983; Cornevin 1980).In this way the apartheid ideological goals became part of the taken-for-granted meanings in the classroom.

2. the institutionalization of educational inequality:

The institutionalized inequality in black schools such as inadequate funding, overcrowded classrooms, lack of facilities, unqualified teachers etc., has had a devastating effect on the curriculum potential. Therefore, while the curricula in black and white secondary schools are technically similar, its particular institutionalized expression in the context of black schooling neutralizes the curriculum in terms of its potential for educational or economic empowerment.

3. the institutionalization of societal racism:

One of the effects of the institutionalization of racist practices through official legislation was that it ensured that the few black students who successfully completed schooling found their way to social and economic mobility systematically blocked by a network of laws ensuring white dominance in the marketplace. The curriculum therefore, despite its declared objectives, becomes irrelevant and meaningless in this broader social context.

It is this institutionalization of the curriculum, particularly in its implicit and subtle forms, that presents perhaps the most formidable challenge to a postapartheid design.

II. THE CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

My purpose in this section is to explore the curricular dimension of student resistance by arguing that a curriculum-conflict dialectic operates in black South African schooling. That is, the curriculum is both the basis for and target of student resistance.

Within the domain of critical theory a more recent perspective has focused on resistance theories of schooling (Giroux 1983; Anyon 1983; Willis 1977). Arguing for an alternative to functionalist interpretations of student opposition, Giroux (1983) puts the case for resistance theory succinctly:

> "Resistance in this case redefines the causes and meaning of oppositional behavior by arguing that it has little to do with the logic of deviance, individual pathology, learned helplessness (and, of course, genetic explanations), and a great deal to do, though not exhaustively, with the logic of moral and political indignation." (p.107).

In a comprehensive study on student culture and activism in black South African universities, Nkomo (1984) concluded that "curricular and noncurricular factors...feed into students' stores of previous experiences and increase their consciousness and activism." (p.135). The focus in this section will be on the curricular basis for resistance.

Three fundamental concepts which appear in critical theory literature to describe the functions of schooling are reproduction[1]

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[1]Criticism has been levelled at the economic determinism of Bowles & Gintis'(1976) correspondence principle, and the rigid structuralism in Althusser's (1971) notion of the economic base-

(cultural and economic), legitimation, and socialization (or domestication). Respectively, these concepts explain how schools reflect and recreate the inequitous social order, provide the necessary rationalizations to justify the status quo, and enforce behavior patterns and attitudes which bring conformity and submission.

It has been argued in theory[2] and is evident through observation of the South African scene, that the functions of legitimation, reproduction and socialization are not realized in a mechanistic, deterministic manner. Murphy's (1973) analysis of curricula used in black South African schools concluded that these same materials could produce "unintended consequences", a theme followed in a later work by Nkomo (1984). Based on his "banking concept" of education, in which the docility and passivity of students are assumed, Freire (1973) too warns that "sooner or later (these) contradictions may lead formerly passive students to turn against their domestication and the attempt to domesticate reality." (p.61).

A range of studies has uncovered expressions of the apartheid ideology in curricula through the functions of legitimation (Chisholm 1980; Cornevin 1980), socialization (Murphy 1973; Dovey & Mason 1984), and reproduction (Davies 1984; Hlatshwayo 1985). It is not necessary to duplicate these studies. I will however focus briefly on two neglected

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superstructure relationship (see Apple, 1979; and Giroux, 1981).

[2]It is significant that Murphy's (1973) prediction came only three years before the historical Soweto Uprising of students in 1976. However, while I agree with his prediction of a curricular basis for student resistance, I disagree with his explanation that this was the result of "the basic western character"(p.237) of the curriculum.

aspects in the analyses of South African education, namely a) the curricular treatment of resistance and b) the curricular bases for resistance.

The curricular treatment of resistance

The treatment of resistance and conflict in the curriculum of black schools can be characterized by the terms distortion, de-emphasis and devaluation.

A conspicuous feature of the curriculum is the de-emphasis and relative abscence of conflict in the history of South Africa. In her sample of textbooks used in black schools, Maree (1984) found that:

> "There is no mention of black resistance, black political activity, leadership, nor of the illegality of this. History is always nation-building - not, for example, about conflicts of interests within society."

The distortion of resistance is another feature of the curriculum. Conflict is portrayed as primarily interethnic[3] in nature, and solved by the intervention of the white man. Where conflci situations are portrayed in the curriculum, blacks are depicted as mindless savages easily overpowered by superior whites. Black resistance had no basis - political or moral- but was simply a temporary obstacle to the inevitibality of white rule. Thompson (1985) deals extensively with two classical cases of the historical distortion of resistance- the Slagtersnek Rebellion and the Battle of Bloodriver.

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[3]This racist myth has been referred to by Thompson (1985) as the "unassimilability of the black races", a notion still rampant in the politico-educational institutions of South Africa.

The value placed on conflict is entirely negative, and resistance is depicted as undesirable. Afrikaner nationalism is exhalted but African nationalism is largely neglected, except

> "...when it has taken the form of resistance to white domination (for example the ANC[4], it tends to be suggested that it is misguided and illegitimate, and inspired from outside." (Dean et al. 1983).

The curricular bases for resistance

A short historical overview will show the continuity as well as shifting emphases of student resistance. Among slaves in the very first school established, "the earliest form of resistance to schooling was, indeed, simply to keep clear of it altogether." (Molteno 1984). In the previous century and indeed upto 1960, resistance was based on extracurricular issues such as food, classroom conditions, boarding school facilities and teacher-student relationships. Since the 1960s student resistance coincided with and, to a large extent, reflected the broader political phenomena outside the schools - such as the Sharpeville Massacre (1960), independence of African colonies (such as the pro-Frelimo rallies of 1975), the philosophy of Black Consciousness (1960s), and the formation and celebration of the South African republic (1961). It was a specifically curricular issue which however sparked off the unforgettable Sowet Uprising of 1976.

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[4]ANC= The African Nationalist Congress, the foremost black political opposition group, formed in 1912, banned in 1960, and operates from exile in the 1980s.

Three major concepts reflect the curricular bases for resistance: relevancy, contradiction and falsification.

1. Relevancy:

The strongest curricular factor which serves as a basis for rejection and resistance is irrelevancy - the perception that the curriculum does not serve the needs, interests and aspirations of the students. The alternative curriculum proposed by boycotting students in 1985 was given the following rationale:

> "State education teaches children about nutritional requirements for health. How many kids from Bishop Lavis[5] get the minimum? How many from Bishopscourt[6]...Bishop Lavis kids see it as irrelevant...The syllabus describes the historical development of apartheid. Alternative education pupils go home and talk to their parents about the clearing of District Six[7]." (Le May 1985).

The Soweto Uprising of 1976 illustrates on a macrolevel the case of student resistance based on irrelevancy in the curriculum. The imposition and extension of the Afrikaans language in the school curriculum was rejected on:

a) educational grounds - few teachers were qualified to use the language.

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[5]Bishop Lavis is a black township.

[6]Bishopscourt is an affluent white suburb in the same province as Bishop Lavis.

[7]District Six was a prosperous black area cleared according to apartheid laws (the 'Group Areas Act') for white residence.

b) economic grounds - proficiency in English was percieved as essential for employment.

c) political grounds - Afrikaans was regarded as "the language of the oppressor."

2. Contradiction:

The espoused aim of Bantu Education is to provide education which will develop blacks along their own cultural lines and promote black self-development. Beneath this veneer of seemingly progressive rhetoric lies a host of contradictions. The elements of eurocentrism and ethnocentrism in curricula perpetuate notions of white supremacy (Dean et al. 1983), and places the educational experience of blacks within the context of the bantustans (see Lelyveld, 1982).

Curricular objectives also directly contradict the experiential realities of black students outside the school. For example, the new Biology curriculum (ss 10/86) lists seven objectives to be achieved in the classroom, two of which are:

"1.6 a respect for all living things and an urgent awareness of man's responsibilities in the preservation of life.

1.7 a love and appreciation for the Southern African flora and fauna and recognition of the urgent need for nature conservation."

Yet when this curriculum was distributed in schools in 1985/86 thousands of students (primary and secondary) had been imprisoned under the state of emergency, while hundreds were murdered in the same period. Moreover, how could students be expected to show "love and appreciation for flora and fauna" when they live in disease-ridden slums to which they have been relocated by force; when they live in areas in which the flora and

fauna are virtually nonexistent, human life counted as nothing, and the primary purpose of life taken up in the struggle for existence?

Another contradiction arises from the observed disparity between the preparation of schooling and access to the economy of white South Africa. Students clearly have certain expectations of schooling, which is seen as an investment which enhances employment prospects (Nkomo 1984). When such expectations are not met, it increases the frustration with the preparation and experience of schooling.

3. Falsification:

The myth that students were passive and uncritical recipients of knowledge was exploded in the Soweto Uprising. The notion so prevalent among school students generally that "the textbook is always right" was changed. Students came to realize that the professed objectivity of events was erroneous, that their history had been falsified in favor of white political and economic interests, and that their potential as students was falsely portrayed in static and negative terms.

This resistance in terms of attitudinal change was accompanied by a search for alternative curriculum materials. Also, beyond the curricular factor, resistance had important educational implications expressed in new learning methods, improved classroom relationships, and radically altered epistemological beliefs. This is exemplified in Flederman's (1980) case study in a black school immediately following the 1980 school boycott:

> "Pupils objections to the curriculum takes different forms. Although it has still to be studied for examination purposes, the material of the curriculum is handled differently after the boycott...Pupils are learning that valuable knowledge can be defined, selected and interpreted by them, and is generally found outside the curriculum...This new view of the curriculum has resulted in pupils taking a more insightful approach to learning."

The demands of students expressed through various forms of resistance, such as the quest for meaning and relevance, should form an important source for curriculum development in a postapartheid context. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere, "it would be strategically disastrous to overlook these expressions in formulating a postapartheid curriculum" (Jansen 1987).

III. THE POSTAPARTHEID CONTEXT

Any future considerations of curriculum change and development must be based on systematic analyses and thorough understandings of the historical and contemporary contexts of the curriculum. Such knowledge should form the basis for constructing alternatives and for anticipating the challenges which inevitably accompany curriculum change.

In this section I will enumerate, in the form of "knowledge claims", key implications of the aforegoing historical and contemporary analyses for curriculum change in a postapartheid dispensation (see also Jansen 1987).

IMPLICATIONS

1. Curriculum change should take cognizance of the institutionalization of curricular forms in schools. That is, careful attention should be devoted to uncovering the underlying, taken-for-granted meanings and assumptions which govern the curriculum.

2. Technicist approaches to curriculum change in South Africa would be inadequate, since they ignore the ideological functions and legacy of the curriculum.

3. Curriculum change should be based on the negotiation and achievement of "shared meaning" (Marris 1975) between developers and users of the curriculum.

4. The form and content of curriculum change cannot be divorced from the broader sociopolitical context within which the curriculum is located and determined.

5. Curriculum change should be considered in terms of its articulation with broader educational and social changes.

6. Student expressions, particularly as revealed in different forms of resistance, could make a useful contribution to meaningful curriculum change.

7. In the black community, curriculum change involves more than content; it is also an issue of control. It is concerned with legitimacy, rather than what some external source has declared "equal" education.

8. Above all, curriculum change should be comprehensive or holistic in approach i.e., curriculum change should be technically-sound, ideologically-conscious, and contextually-responsive (see Crowfoot & Chesler 1974; Posner 1987).

I do not claim that these curricular implications are complete, nor am I unaware of the controversies and challenge which confront curriculum change in a postcolonial context (see Mazrui 1978). My purpose has simply been to intiate and provoke critical curricular discussion in a field dominated in South Africa by a consensus approach to curricular issues, and seemingly oblivious to a rapidly-approaching, inevitable postapartheid dispensation.

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